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Senate panel hearings on Webster scheduled

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The Senate Intelligence Committee has scheduled a second round of public hearings Thursday afternoon on the nomination of FBI Director William Webster to become head of the CIA, the committee announced yesterday.

Sen. William Cohen, Maine Republican and vice chairman of the committee, said panel members have further questions regarding the FBI's probe into private efforts to supply the Nicaraguan resistance and Lt. Oliver North, former National Security Council aide.

"There have been questions raised about information that might have been available in field offices and whether this information was fully considered and if not, why not," Mr. Cohen said.

Staff sources said that after his first round of confirmation hear-

ings, Mr. Webster sent the committee more information about the rebels and Col. North's role.

The new information raises new questions, and some senators are concerned about Mr. Webster's apparent lack of knowledge in some areas, sources said.

"I think you'll find it's not overly dramatic, but interesting," said one staff member, adding that Mr. Webster's nomination is not in jeopardy.

David Holliday, the committee's spokesman, said some new issues have come up in connection with Mr. Webster's appointment but "nothing certainly to endanger the nomination."

Mr. Webster is the second nominee offered to replace ailing former CIA Director William Casey, who resigned Feb. 2 after undergoing brain cancer surgery.

Robert Gates, the deputy CIA director, originally was named as Mr. Casey's successor, but his nomina-

tion was withdrawn days after the release of the Tower Commission report, which described CIA involvement in the affair.

While many senators have a favorable impression of Mr. Webster, "caution is something they're all going to carry in their hip pockets," said one Senate staffer.

During two days of confirmation hearings earlier this month, committee members questioned Mr. Webster about the FBI's decision to delay for nearly a month an investigation into Southern Air Transport Co. Inc., a Florida company which was involved in efforts to resupply the rebels.

While he was not involved in the Iran-Contra affair, Mr. Webster told the committee he learned that Col. North was suspected of illegal activities 25 days before details of the affair became public.

Mr. Webster said he received an internal memo, indicating that Col. North's activities could result in an investigation by a special counsel and urging that Col. North not be given information concerning federal investigations of private efforts to supply the rebels during a congressional ban on military aid.